
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Prospekt 21 – Research projects for early career researchers

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden's university colleges and new universities to join with the business sector in applying for funding of research projects for early career researchers. The research projects must be conducted in co-production with the business sector. The projects will strengthen early career researchers in their development towards becoming independent researchers and will contribute to development and innovation at the university or university college and among participating companies.

Maria Dollhopf, Programme Manager
maria.dollhopf@kks.se, 073-712 81 36

We require the application no
later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on
August 27, 2021

Contents

About the Knowledge Foundation	3
Purpose and objective	3
Who may apply?	3
How should the funds be used?	4
University involvement	4
Business sector involvement	5
Formal requirements	6
Evaluation	7
Evaluation criteria	7
Scientific quality	7
Benefits to the business partners	7
Expected results and effects	7
Implementation	8
Application	8
Timetable and decisions	10

About the Knowledge Foundation

The Knowledge Foundation finances research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and new universities¹ with the purpose of strengthening Sweden's competitiveness. We provide funding when research and education activities are conducted in collaboration between academia and business partners. The aim is to build strong and profiled knowledge environments that co-produce research and education with the business sector. The Knowledge Foundation does not identify specific research areas, and calls are open for all scientific and artistic research fields.

Purpose and objective

In a competitive system for research funding where much focus is on the applicant's previous research experience, early career researchers are often unsuccessful. At the same time, promising early career researchers need the opportunity to manage their own research projects that also benefit to their professional career.

The *Prospekt* programme provides opportunity for early career researchers to independently manage a research project in co-production with business partners. All partners in the project should together investigate a clearly defined question which is appropriate to the scope of the project and the competences of the partners.

The objective is to enable early career researchers to develop into independent researchers and at the same time contribute towards development and innovation among participating partner companies. *Prospekt* is also a possibility for renewal of research groups by recruitment of promising early career researchers, which may contribute to the development of the research and education environment.

Who may apply?

Sweden's university colleges and new universities may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all scientific and artistic research fields. When the application concerns an artistic field of research, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

The project manager must be an early career researcher, which means that from the date stipulated on the doctoral degree certificate until the closing date for applications (August 28, 2020), he or she should have been academically active for a maximum of 3 years. Time during which the researcher has not been academically active, for example employment in business sector or parental leave, will not be counted.

The Knowledge Foundation encourages mobility and especially welcomes applications from researchers who received their doctorate from a university other than the one applying to host the project. Early career researchers may also apply for funding even if they are currently employed at another university, in the business sector or by industrial

¹ Blekinge Institute of Technology, Swedish Defence University, The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences GIH, Dalarna University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Halmstad, Jönköping University, Kristianstad University, University of Skövde, University West, Karlstad University, Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal Institute of Art, Royal College of Music, Stockholm University of the Arts, Södertörn University and Örebro University.

research institutes. When the project begins, however, the researcher must be employed by the proposed host university (within the target group of the Knowledge Foundation, see footnote 1).

The project must be co-produced with business partners (see definition under Business sector involvement). Other collaborating partners (e.g., public agencies, research institutes, other universities) may participate in the project, but their contribution does not count as co-financing.

How should the funds be used?

The project manager must be employed at the host university at the latest at the starting date of the project. Funding from the Knowledge Foundation should primarily be used as salary funds for the project manager regarding working time within the *Prospekt* project. We encourage the project manager to engage outside the research project in teaching, other research projects or other duties at the department, that may contribute to the career development. However, this cannot be included in and funded by the *Prospekt* project, hence an appropriate activity level of the project manager within the project is 70 to 80 percent of full time.

In addition to salary costs, expenses directly related to the project, e.g., costs for facilities and materials, can be included in the budget. The Knowledge Foundation encourages the early career researcher to include appropriate leadership training during the project, which can also be included in the budget. Salary costs covering additional resource/s may be included given it is a limited activity, such as for example collection of material or tests (note that PhD students cannot be financed through *Prospekt*). Salary costs covering this additional resource/s cannot exceed 1/3 of the salary costs for the project manager. The activities of additional resources should be clearly described and motivated in the project plan.

The application must present a budget that covers the entire project. This includes funding from the Knowledge Foundation, business partner resources and contributions from the university. Costs accrued before or after the approved project period cannot be accepted.

Budgeting of funds must comply with the instructions presented in the document *General Terms and Conditions*, see www.kks.se.

The maximum funding from the Knowledge Foundation is 2 million SEK, excluding overhead costs. The application should not include overhead costs. Such costs will be calculated and included in the proposed contract if the Knowledge Foundation approves the application.

University involvement

The host university must cover for the project manager's salary related to working time at the university outside the project (not to be included in the application budget). Also, the university must provide direct resources to the project corresponding to at least 20 percent of the amount applied for from the Knowledge Foundation. If, for example, 1 million SEK is applied for from the Knowledge Foundation, the university must contribute with direct resources corresponding to at least 200,000 SEK.

The project manager is responsible for the implementation of the project. The application should also state who will be the project owner within the university. The project owner, who should have staff and budget responsibility at a senior level, has responsibility for ensuring proper conditions for implementing and monitoring the project. The project owner may be a head of department or another appropriate person, in accordance with the internal organization and delegation of the university.

A reference group consisting of at least three senior researchers must be linked to the project. The group should include at least two researchers (at least one of whom is a 'docent') connected to the research environment where the project manager will work, but also one researcher from another university. If the external researcher is active at a university which is not part of the foundation's target group (see footnote 1), and if his or her participation is to be paid for, the university hosting the project must cover for this cost. The project manager's doctoral supervisor may not be included in the reference group. The reference group should assist the project manager with advice and recommendations concerning both the project and the project manager's professional development.

Business sector involvement

The project must be conducted in co-production with business partners. This means that the academic and business partners, from their different perspectives, together must formulate and address a jointly formulated question. The question presented in the application should be based on a relevant problem that, if solved, will benefit the business partners, but also, from an academic perspective, will contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge.

By business sector, the Knowledge Foundation refers primarily to the private business sector. The concept, however, may include companies under public ownership that are active in competitive markets and where the company finances its operations in the same manner as companies in the private business sector. Hence, public subsidies or fees may not constitute a significant portion of the company's revenues. The organizations must primarily produce goods or services and may not be solely administrative enterprises.

The organizations must have operations in Sweden to the extent that their engagement will generate value for the collaboration, but also give possibilities to integrate the results from the collaboration into their operations in Sweden. For companies with fewer than 10 employees and/or less than 10 million SEK in annual turnover (based on the most recent annual report), the company's prerequisites for contributing to the project in accordance with the project plan and budget, must be very clearly described.

The business sector's contribution to the project must be described and justified in the application. Also, signed letter of intent from each of the co-producing companies should be added. The letters should briefly describe the company's commitment, role, and contribution, as well as the motives and value for participation in the project.

For an appropriate level of co-production, the participation of 2 to 4 companies is recommended within *Prospekt*. In exceptional cases co-production can take place with

only a single company, but only if the scientific relevance in the project still can be ensured. In such case, this must be specifically justified.

If financial or personal links exist between companies involved, between any company and the university, or between any company and individual researcher, this must be disclosed. The project plan must clearly indicate any personal conflicts of interest, and the individuals' various roles in the company or university must be clearly described.

The business partners' contribution to the project must in total correspond to at least the same amount as that applied for from the Knowledge Foundation. If, for example, 1 million SEK is applied for from the Knowledge Foundation, the business partners must in total contribute with resources corresponding to at least 1 million SEK.

Formal requirements

The application must meet the following requirements before the Knowledge Foundation will consider it for evaluation. If the application does not meet the following requirements, it will be rejected due to formal reasons.

- The project must be in line with the purpose and objectives of the call.
- The application shall include parts and appendices according to the call instructions.
- The project manager should not have been academically active for more than 3 years, which must be clearly shown in the CV.
- The university must provide direct resources to the project corresponding to at least 20 percent of the amount applied for from the foundation. This must be presented in the budget.
- The project manager should be supported by a reference group (see above).
- The project must include the participation of business partners, and the project plan and budget must describe the involvement of all partners.
- Business partners who are co-financers must fall within the Knowledge Foundation's definition of business sector.
- The contribution to the project by business partners must correspond to at least the same amount as that applied for from the Knowledge Foundation. This must be presented in the budget.
- Signed letter of intent from each of the co-producing companies should be added.
- Maximum funding from the Knowledge Foundation is 2 million SEK.
- The project duration should be 1 to 2 years.
- Any financial or personal links must be clarified in the application (see above).
- Budgeting of funds must comply with the instructions presented in the document *General Terms and Conditions*, see www.kks.se.

- The earliest starting date for the project is 2022-01-01. The latest starting date for the project is 2022-04-01.
- The vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager must sign the application.

Evaluation²

The secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation will review the applications to determine if they comply with the formal requirements.

If the application complies with the formal requirements, the scientific part of the project will be evaluated by international peers (peer review). An external evaluation panel will conduct an overall evaluation based on the evaluation criteria below. In evaluating *Prospekt* applications, the criterion concerning the project manager's professional development is given a special weight in the evaluation (underlined below). Funding decisions are made by the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation, based on recommendations from the external evaluation panel.

No additions or modifications to the application will be approved after submission of the application (see, however, below about doctoral degree certificates).

Evaluation criteria

Scientific quality

- How well does the application relate to the state-of -the-art within the research field? How well does the scientific question/problem address this?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?
- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- How strong are the project manager's scientific qualifications for implementing the project?

Benefits to the business partners

- How relevant is the scientific question/problem in relation to the needs of participating business partners?

Expected results and effects

- To what extent is the project and the professional development plan expected to contribute to the professional development of the project manager and the possibility to become an independent researcher?
- To what extent is the project expected to generate high-quality results (for example in the form of scientific publications or artistically accepted works)?

² When the application concerns an artistic field of research, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of participating companies?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of the current research and education environment at the university?

Implementation

- How well planned and organized is the work of the project, particularly regarding work distribution and co-operation among the partners?
- How well is the reference group composed?
- How well does the budget reflect funding needs outlined in the project plan?

Application

Applications are submitted via the Knowledge Foundation's website, www.kks.se by the project manager. This is important as the applicant's account is connected to the project and reporting of the project.

Signatures from the project manager, the project owner and the vice-chancellor are required. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for described implementation. The project owner and the vice-chancellor assure through their signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description.

The abstract, project plan and CV for key individuals in the project must be in English to enable international review.

The application form should state the city and postcode for the place where each participating company will conduct the main part of its co-production (i.e., not necessarily the place for, for example, the head office).

One Swedish and one international peer with extensive knowledge within the research field, and without known conflicts of interest, should be suggested.

The project budget is filled in directly in the application form. Note that the application should not include overhead costs (see above).

The following appendixes (as pdf-files) should be attached to the application and in the same order as below:

1. The project's host academic environment (may not exceed 2 pages)

To be uploaded under 'Host research and education environment'.

Describe the academic environment and its research and education activities so the current position and future plans are shown. What is the environment's development needs, strategies and ambitions regarding research and education in collaboration?

The description should include the following headings (each heading refers to both education and research):

- current position and development needs,
- strategies and ambitions,

- main results of the past few years,
- staff composition,
- funding,
- collaboration partners (academic and non-academic).

2. The project's expected contribution to the research and education environment (may not exceed 1 page)

To be uploaded under 'Host research and education environment'.

Describe the strategic value of the proposed project by demonstrating how the project will support the development of the academic environment in line with the university's aspirations for collaborative research and education.

3. Project plan (may not exceed 10 pages + 2 pages *Plan for professional development*, see below)

To be uploaded under "Project plan"

The project plan should be entirely page numbered.

- Describe the scientific questions/problems to be addressed in the project, and how they relate to state-of -the-art within the research field. Also describe their relevance to the business sector.
- Describe expected results and effects from the project and how they respond to the needs of both the project manager and the university, as well as the participating companies.
- Describe clearly how the project is to be implemented, e.g., describe the contribution of each partner and how they complement each other's competencies and contributions in the project. Work contributions from key individuals in the project must be described, including company individuals.
- Describe and justify all costs included in the budget, both university and company costs. It should be clear what equipment or material is included, why they are relevant to the project, and how the costs have been calculated.
- Include a schematic time and activity plan. Also, include a brief risk analysis regarding the project's ability to be carried out according to plan.
- **Plan for professional development** (maximum 2 pages). Add the Professional development plan at the end of the Project Plan under a separate heading. Describe how the project manager's professional development and possibility to become an independent researcher is supported by the project and other activities. These activities can consist of other tasks within research or education, active networking outside the university, promoting one's own mobility, internationalization, skills development in leadership, etc. The plan should also describe how the reference group will support the professional development.

4. Qualifications (may not exceed 2 pages per person)

To be uploaded under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.

CVs with relevant information about key individuals in the project, also key company individuals, should be added. CVs exceeding 2 pages per person will not be considered in the evaluation.

5. Copy of the projects manager's doctoral degree certificate

To be uploaded under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.

If the applicant at the time of the application has not yet received a doctoral degree certificate, but will do so in a short time, the certificate may be added later. In that case, this should be clearly stated in the application.

6. Letter of intent from participating companies (may not exceed 1 page per company)

To be uploaded under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.

Signed letter of intent from each of the co-producing companies should be added. The letters should briefly describe the company's commitment, role, and contribution, as well as the motives and value for participation in the project.

7. Signatures from the university (appendix form).

To be uploaded under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.

The application must be signed by the project manager, the project owner, and the vice-chancellor. Appendix template is downloaded from the Foundation's website, www.kks.se. Applications without signatures will not be considered.

Timetable and decisions

- The Knowledge Foundation must receive the application no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on 2021-08-27.
- All applications will be reviewed for compliance with formal requirements. Applications failing to meet the formal requirements will be rejected.
- International peers will review the scientific quality of applications.
- The external evaluation panel will submit its final recommendation to the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation.
- The CEO of the Knowledge Foundation will render a decision on financing, and applicants will be notified in November, 2021.
- After agreement signing, granted projects may commence, earliest in 2022-01-01 and latest in 2022-04-01.